4 PART MINI-SERIES
ROY & DANN THOMAS and DICK GIORDANO
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APR. 85
JONNI THUNDER
Thunderbolt
REVENGE IS
RED NAILS!
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JONNI THUNDER
a.k.a. Thunderbolt™
ROY & DANN THOMAS, WRITERS
DICK GIORDANO, ARTIST
(WITH AN ASSIST BY)
MIKE ESPOSITO
GERRY CONWAY, CO-CREATOR
ADRIENNE ROY, COLORIST
L. LOIS & ORZ., LETTERERS
RED NAILS
IN THE SUNSET!
MOST NIGHTS, YOU GET A GREAT VIEW OF HOLLYWOOD FROM GRIFFITH OBSERVATORY.
WHAT'S THE STORY DOWN THERE, PETE?
FRACTURED HIS SKULL IN THE FALL--THAT'S MY GUESS, LIEUTENANT.
BUT AL HERE'S BETTING TWENTY ON A BROKEN NECK AS PROBABLE CAUSE.
THIS ISN'T ONE OF THEM, THOUGH.
YOU AND McGUFFIN WANT A PIECE OF THE POOL, LT. SANCHEZ?
"The cops. No way yet has been invented to say goodbye to them."
--Raymond Chandler, in The Long Goodbye.
C-1892

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TWO CORPSES IN 24 HOURS, AND ALL IN *YOUR* IMMEDIATE VICINITY. *NOT* GOOD, JONNI.

LOOK, I *CALLED* YOU GUYS, DIDN'T I? AND WHAT ABOUT THIS SAWED-OFF *LIGHT-SABRE?*

Oh YEAH... I'LL TAKE THAT.

IT'S *YOURS*. AND DON'T WORRY--I DIDN'T SMUDGE ANY *PRINTS*.

MY DAD WAS A COP ONCE, TOO, REMEMBER?

HERE, McGUFFIN...HOLD ONTO THIS *LASER-GUN*, OR WHATEVER IT IS, LIKE IT WAS YOUR *LAST DOUGHNUT*.

FUNNY MAN.

NOW, Ms. THUNDER--TELL ME *AGAIN* WHAT HAPPENED.

MAYBE IT'LL SOUND BETTER AT *FOUR A.M.* THAN IT DID AT *ONE, TWO, OR THREE*.

DON'T *BET* ON IT, MIKE.

LIKE I SAID, SOME *GUY* CALLED--TOLD ME TO COME TO THE OBSERVATORY AT MIDNIGHT FOR THE LOWDOWN ON THAT *STIFF* I FOUND IN MY OFFICE YESTERDAY.

I *AM* A *P.I.*, AFTER ALL --SO I DECIDED TO PLAY ALONG.

THAT'S WHEN THAT STATE-OF-THE-ART *HITMAN* TRIED TO TURN ME INTO *SPAGHETTIOS*.

WOULD HAVE, TOO, IF HIS *BALANCE* WASN'T EVEN WORSE THAN HIS *AIM*.

MAYBE HE WAS CLUMSY. THEN AGAIN, MAYBE HE WAS *PUSHED*.

WISH WE'D FOUND AN *I.D.* ON THE BODY.

AT LEAST YOU KNOW NOW HE WASN'T JUST A *WINO*, LIKE HE PRETENDED TO BE WHEN YOU FOUND HIM IN THE *ALLEY* BEHIND MY OFFICE...

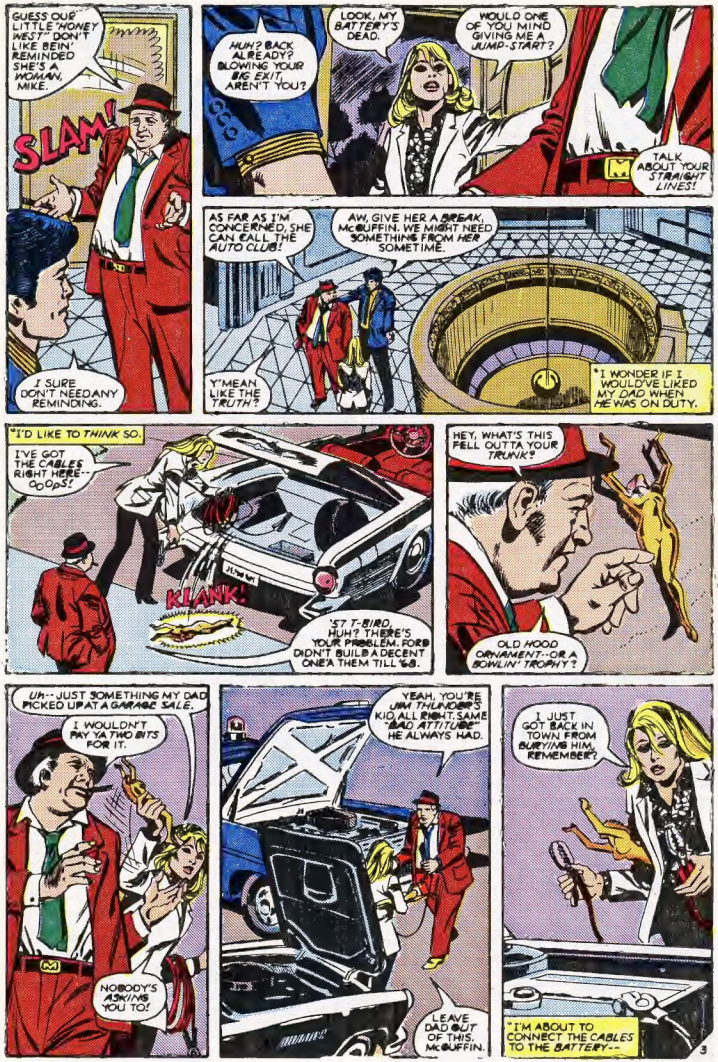
...SO MAYBE *NOW* YOU'LL BELIEVE THAT MY STORY ABOUT A *GIANT METAL COCKROACH* SACKING MY OFFICE WASN'T AS CRAZY AS HE *CONVINCED* YOU IT WAS.*

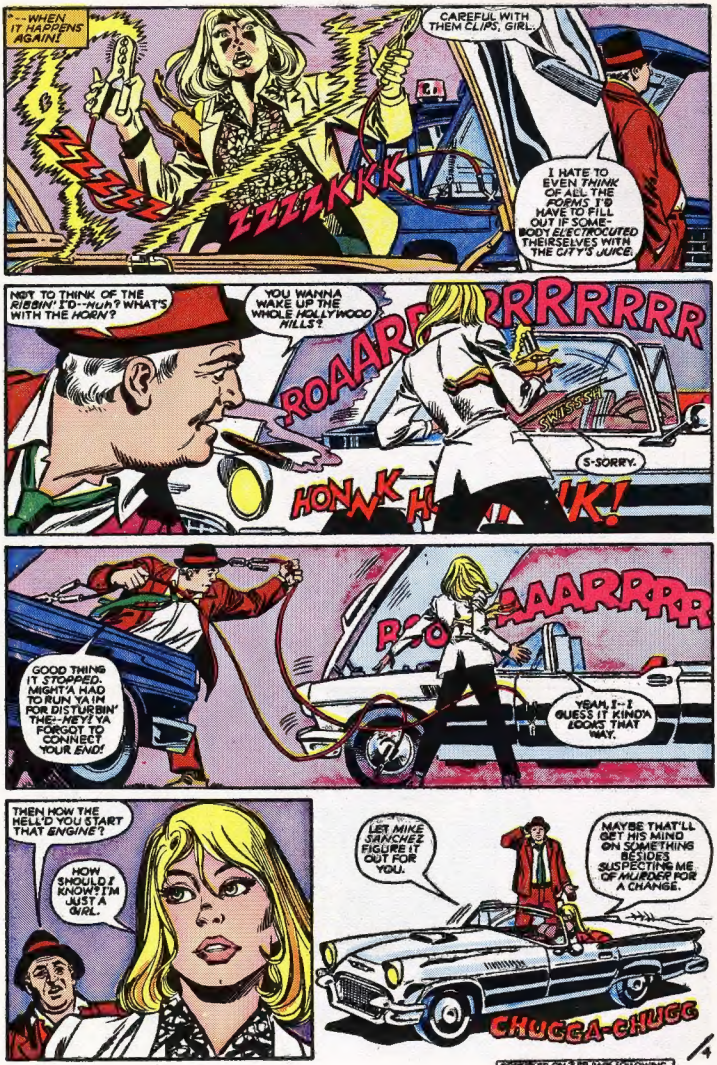
DON'T HOPE *TOO MUCH*, LADY.

ANYWAY, YOU CAN GO NOW. I IMAGINE YOU'LL BE WANTING TO WASH YOUR HAIR.

SURE, LT. SANCHEZ--RIGHT AFTER I CROCHET ME A *CASSEROLE!*

*LAST ISSUE.--Roy and Dick.


GUESS OUR LITTLE MONKEY MEST" DON'T LIKE BEIN' REMINDED SHE'S A WOMAN, MIKE.
SLAM!
I SURE DON'T NEEDANY REMINDING.
HUH? BACK ALREADY? BLOWING YOUR BIG EXIT, AREN'T YOU?
LOOK, MY BATTERY'S DEAD.
WOULD ONE OF YOU MIND GIVING ME A JUMP-START?
TALK ABOUT YOUR STRAIGHT LINES!
AS FAR AS I'M CONCERNED, SHE CAN CALL THE AUTO CLUB!
AW, GIVE HER A BREAK, MCGUFFIN. WE MIGHT NEED SOMETHING FROM HER SOMETIME.
Y'MEAN LIKE THE TRUTH?
"I WONDER IF I WOULD'VE LIKED MY DAD WHEN HE WAS ON DUTY.
"I'D LIKE TO THINK SO.
I'VE GOT THE CABLES RIGHT HERE-- OOOPS!
KLANK!
'57 T-BIRD, HUH? THERE'S YOUR PROBLEM: FORD DIDN'T BUILD A DECENT ONE'A THEM TILL '68.
HEY, WHAT'S THIS FELL OUTTA YOUR TRUNK?
OLD HOOD ORNAMENT--OR A BOWLIN' TROPHY?
Uh-- JUST SOMETHING MY DAD PICKED UP AT A GARAGE SALE.
I WOULDN'T PAY YA TWO BITS FOR IT.
NOBODY'S ASKIN'S YOU TO!
YEAH, YOU'RE JIM THUNDER'S KID, ALL RIGHT. SAME HARD ATTITUDE HE ALWAYS HAD.
LEAVE DAD OUT OF THIS, MCGUFFIN.
I JUST GOT BACK IN TOWN FROM BURYING HIM, REMEMBER?
"I'M ABOUT TO CONNECT THE CABLES TO THE BATTERY--


--WHEN IT HAPPENS AGAIN!
ZZZZZZ
ZZZZKKK
CAREFUL WITH THEM CLIPS, GIRL.
I HATE TO EVEN THINK OF ALL THE FORMS I'D HAVE TO FILL OUT IF SOMEBODY ELECTROCUTED THEIRSELVES WITH THE CITY'S JUICE.
NOT TO THINK OF THE RIBBIN' I'D--HUH? WHAT'S WITH THE HORN?
YOU WANNA WAKE UP THE WHOLE HOLLYWOOD HILLS?
ROAARRRRRRRR
SKRTCHSSH
S-SORRY.
HONNK
GOOD THING IT STOPPED. MIGHT'A HAD TO RUN YA IN FOR DISTURBIN' THE--HEY! YA FORGOT TO CONNECT YOUR END!
YEAH, I--I GUESS IT KINDA LOOKS THAT WAY.
THEN HOW THE HELL'D YOU START THAT ENGINE?
HOW SHOULD I KNOW? I'M JUST A GIRL.
LET MIKE SANCHEZ FIGURE IT OUT FOR YOU.
MAYBE THAT'LL GET HIS MIND ON SOMETHING BESIDES SUSPECTING ME OF MURDER FOR A CHANGE.
CHUGGA-CHUGG

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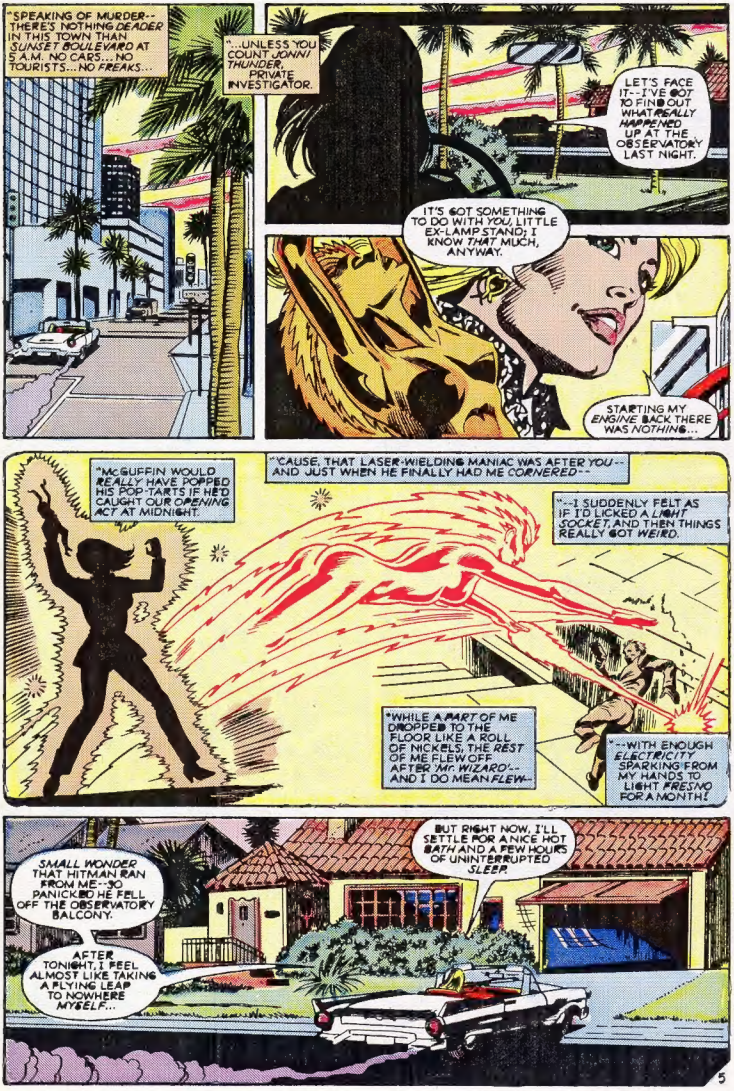
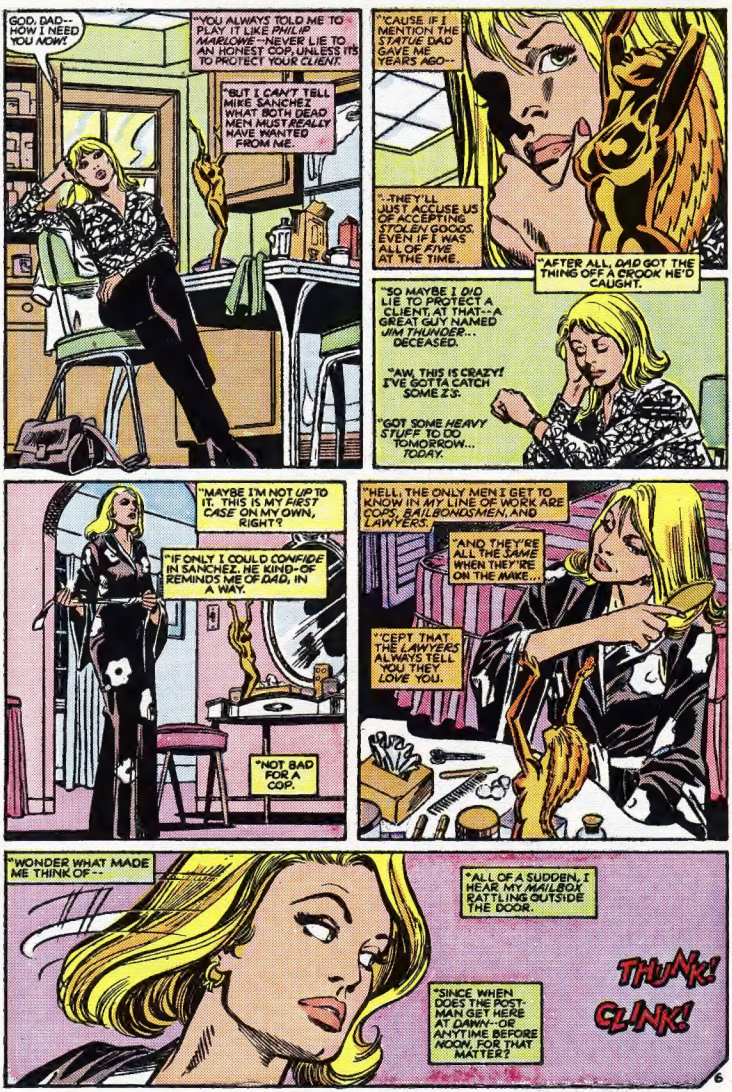

"SPEAKING OF MURDER--THERE'S NOTHING DEADER IN THIS TOWN THAN SUNSET BOULEVARD AT 5 A.M. NO CARS... NO TOURISTS... NO FREAKS...
"...UNLESS YOU COUNT JONNI THUNDER, PRIVATE INVESTIGATOR.
LET'S FACE IT--I'VE GOT TO FIND OUT WHAT REALLY HAPPENED UP AT THE OBSERVATORY LAST NIGHT.
IT'S GOT SOMETHING TO DO WITH YOU, LITTLE EX-LAMP STAND; I KNOW THAT MUCH, ANYWAY.
STARTING MY ENGINE BACK THERE WAS NOTHING...
"MCGUFFIN WOULD REALLY HAVE POPPED HIS POP-TARTS IF HE'D CAUGHT OUR OPENING ACT AT MIDNIGHT.
"CAUSE, THAT LASER-WIELDING MANIAC WAS AFTER YOU--AND JUST WHEN HE FINALLY HAD ME CORNERED--
"...I SUDDENLY FELT AS IF I'D LICKED A LIGHT SOCKET, AND THEN THINGS REALLY GOT WEIRD.
"WHILE A PART OF ME DROPPED TO THE FLOOR LIKE A ROLL OF NICKELS, THE REST OF ME FLEW OFF AFTER 'MR. WIZARD'--AND I DO MEAN FLEW--
"--WITH ENOUGH ELECTRICITY SPARKING FROM MY HANDS TO LIGHT FRESNO FOR A MONTH!
SMALL WONDER THAT HITMAN RAN FROM ME--SO PANICKED HE FELL OFF THE OBSERVATORY BALCONY.
AFTER TONIGHT, I FEEL ALMOST LIKE TAKING A FLYING LEAP TO NOWHERE MYSELF...
BUT RIGHT NOW, I'LL SETTLE FOR A NICE HOT BATH AND A FEW HOURS OF UNINTERRUPTED SLEEP.


GOD, DAD-- HOW I NEED YOU NOW!
"YOU ALWAYS TOLD ME TO PLAY IT LIKE PHILIP MARLOWE--NEVER LIE TO AN HONEST COP, UNLESS IT'S TO PROTECT YOUR CLIENT.
"BUT I CAN'T TELL MIKE SANCHEZ WHAT BOTH DEAD MEN MUST REALLY HAVE WANTED FROM ME.
"CAUSE IF I MENTION THE STATUE DAD GAVE ME YEARS AGO--
"--THEY'LL JUST ACCUSE US OF ACCEPTING STOLEN GOODS. EVEN IF I WAS ALL OF FIVE AT THE TIME.
"AFTER ALL, DAD GOT THE THING OFF A CROOK HE'D CAUGHT.
"SO MAYBE I DID LIE TO PROTECT A CLIENT, AT THAT--A GREAT GUY NAMED JIM THUNDER... DECEASED.
"AW, THIS IS CRAZY! I'VE GOTTA CATCH SOME Z'S.
"GOT SOME HEAVY STUFF TO DO TOMORROW... TODAY.
"MAYBE I'M NOT UP TO IT. THIS IS MY FIRST CASE ON MY OWN, RIGHT?
"IF ONLY I COULD CONFIDE IN SANCHEZ. HE KIND-OF REMINDS ME OF DAD, IN A WAY.
"NOT BAD FOR A COP.
"HELL, THE ONLY MEN I GET TO KNOW, IN MY LINE OF WORK ARE COPS, BAILBONDSMEN, AND LAWYERS.
"AND THEY'RE ALL THE SAME WHEN THEY'RE ON THE MAKE...
"CEPT THAT THE LAWYERS ALWAYS TELL YOU THEY LOVE YOU.
"WONDER WHAT MADE ME THINK OF--
"ALL OF A SUDDEN, I HEAR MY MAILBOX RATTLING OUTSIDE THE DOOR.
"SINCE WHEN DOES THE POST-MAN GET HERE AT DAWN--OR ANYTIME BEFORE NOON, FOR THAT MATTER?
THUNK!
CLINK!

IF STEALING SOCIAL SECURITY CHECKS IS YOUR GAME, FRIEND--YOU'RE ABOUT FORTY YEARS TOO EARLY.
UH--YOU GOT ME ALL WRONG, EH, UH--MISS THUNDER.
$10,000
Y'SEE, I'M AN OFFICIAL REPRESENTATIVE OF FLEISCHER'S CLEARINGHOUSE--
...HERE TO DELIVER, IN PERSON, YOUR ENTRY IN THE THREE-MILLION-DOLLAR GIVEAWAY SWEEPSTAKES.
LIKE HELL YOU ARE.
NO, REALLY! IN FACT, YOU MAY ALREADY HAVE WON--HEY?
YOU CRAZY BROAD!
NOT CRAZY ENOUGH TO BELIEVE YOU OR YOUR LITTLE-LEAGUE BRAIN!
NOW, WHO SENT YOU HERE TO SNOOP THROUGH MY MAIL? SLIM, MAYBE?
I--I DON'T KNOW WHAT YOU'RE TALKING ABOUT--
--BUT IF THE "SLIM" DUDE IS YOUR EX, I CAN SEE WHY HE LEFT!
CUT THE CRACKS! ARE YOU GOING TO TELL ME YOUR NAME NOW--
--OR ARE YOU GONNA TELL THE AMBULANCE DRIVER LATER?
KOFF KOFF
7

OKAY, DON'T TELL ME. I'LL LOOK IT UP.
"HARRISON TRUMP SAN FRANCISCO." HMMM?
'CORDING TO THIS, WE'VE GOT A WHOLE LOT MORE IN COMMON THAN BLONDE HAIR.
YOU KNOW, I KIND-OF FIGURED YOU FOR A FELLOW P.I. ALL ALONG.
THEN H-HOW ABOUT LETTING ME UP--YOU KNOW, JUST AS A PROFESSIONAL COURTESY?
SURE THING, HARRY. RIGHT AFTER YOU TELL ME WHAT YOU'RE DOING DOWN HERE IN L.A., WITH YOUR HAND IN MY MAILBOX.
LOOK AT THAT, BETTY!
YOU NEED HELP WITH THAT GUY, LADY?
GREAT! GAWKING JOGGERS-- JUST WHAT I NEEDED!
LET ME DO THE TALKING. I'LL GET RID OF 'EM FAST.
(GASP!)
BUT I'VE GOT TO GO HOME, LADY! SOMEBODY'S GOTTA DRIVE MY KIDS TO SCHOOL.
I ALREADY PAID YOU FOR LAST NIGHT. DIDN'T I?
WHY, YOU DIRTY--
SHAMEFUL!
I TOLD YOU WE SHOULD'VE BOUGHT THAT CONDO IN THE VALLEY, GEORGE.
YOU CAN PUT YOUR EYES BACK IN, FOLKS. MY GOOD BUDDY HERE IS A REAL COM--
BARK! BARK!
--EDIAN!
THAT'S RIGHT-- THE STAND-UP KIND.
SO LONG! SEE YOU IN HELL, KID!
Oh, SOONER THAN THAT, HARRISON TRUMP!
MUCH, MUCH SOONER!
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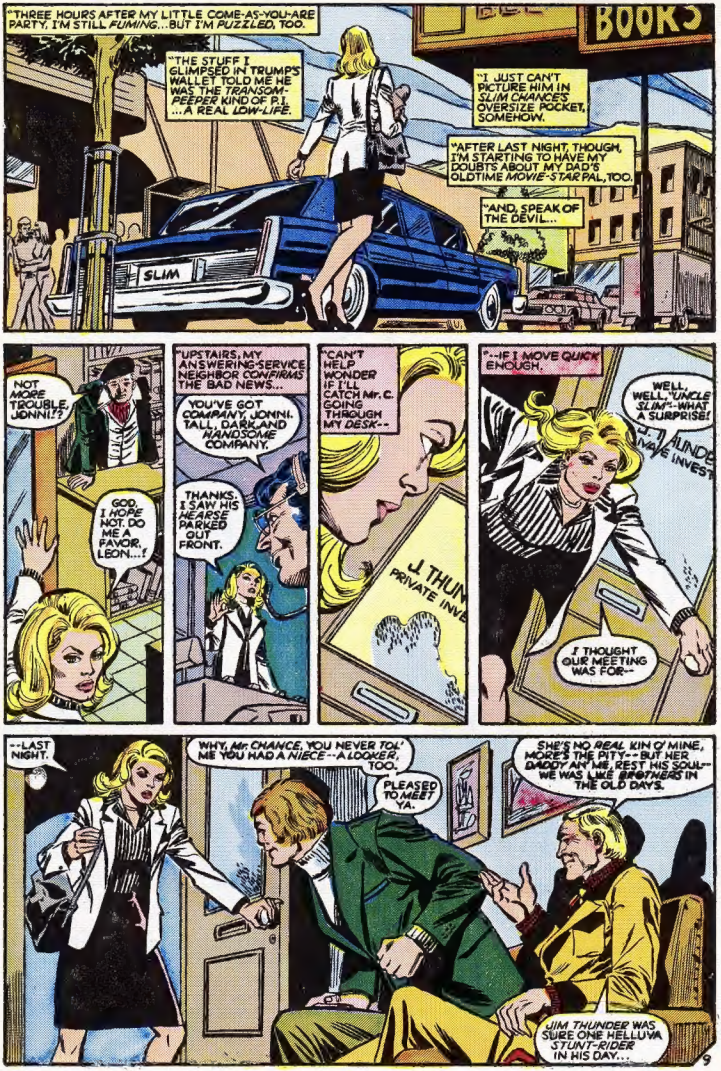
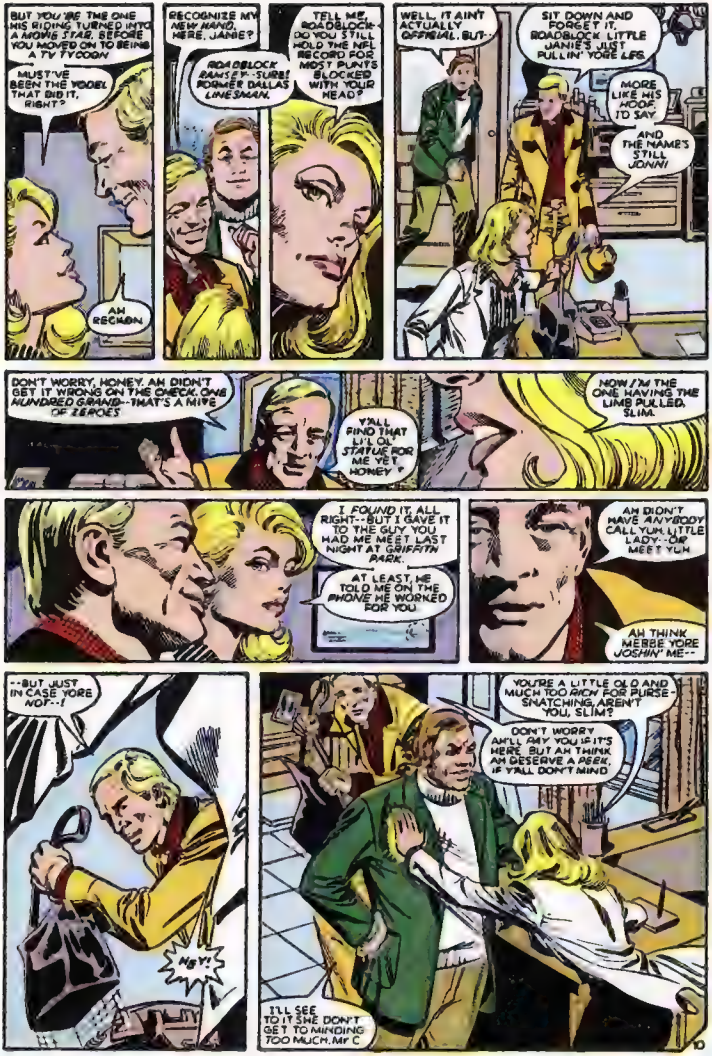
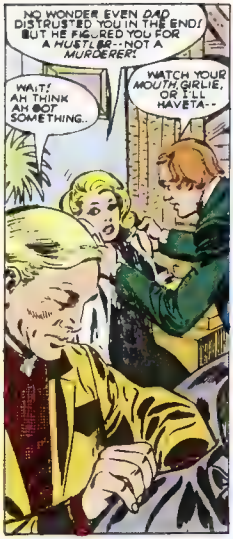

"THREE HOURS AFTER MY LITTLE COME-AS-YOU-ARE PARTY, I'M STILL FUMING...BUT I'M PUZZLED, TOO.
"THE STUFF I GLIMPSED IN TRUMP'S WALLET TOLD ME HE WAS THE TRANSOM-PEEPER KIND OF P.I. ...A REAL LOW-LIFE.
BOOKS
"I JUST CAN'T PICTURE HIM IN SLIM CHANCE'S OVERSIZE POCKET. SOMEHOW.
"AFTER LAST NIGHT, THOUGH, I'M STARTING TO HAVE MY DOUBTS ABOUT MY DAD'S OLDTIME MOVIE-STAR PAL, TOO.
"AND, SPEAK OF THE DEVIL...
SLIM
NOT MORE TROUBLE, JONNI!?
GOD, I HOPE NOT. DO ME A FAVOR, LEON...!
"UPSTAIRS, MY ANSWERING-SERVICE NEIGHBOR CONFIRMS THE BAD NEWS...
YOU'VE GOT COMPANY, JONNI. TALL, DARK AND HANDSOME COMPANY.
THANKS. I SAW HIS HEARSE PARKED OUT FRONT.
"CAN'T HELP WONDER IF I'LL CATCH MR. C. GOING THROUGH MY DESK--
J. THUN
PRIVATE INVE
"...IF I MOVE QUICK ENOUGH.
WELL, WELL, "UNCLE SLIM"--WHAT A SURPRISE!
J. THUNDE
PRIVATE INVES
I THOUGHT OUR MEETING WAS FOR--
--LAST NIGHT.
WHY, MR. CHANCE, YOU NEVER TOL' ME YOU HAD A NIECE--A LOOKER, TOO.
PLEASED TO MEET YA.
SHE'S NO REAL KIN O' MINE, MORE'S THE PITY--BUT HER DADDY AN' ME, REST HIS SOUL--WE WAS LIKE BROTHERS IN THE OLD DAYS.
JIM THUNDER WAS SURE ONE HELLUVA STUNT-RIDER IN HIS DAY...

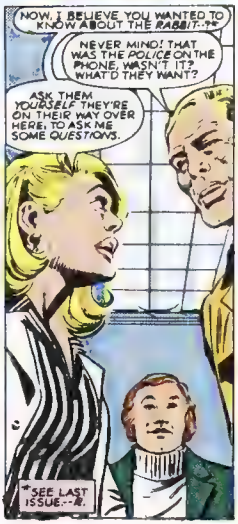

BUT YOU ARE THE ONE HIS RIDING TURNED INTO A MOVIE STAR, BEFORE YOU MOVED ON TO BEING A TY TYCOON
MUST'VE BEEN THE YODEL THAT DID IT, RIGHT?
AM RECKON
RECOGNIZE MY NEW MANO, HERE, JANE?
ROADBLOCK RAMSEY--SURE! PIONEER DALLAS LINEBACKER.
TELL ME, ROADBLOCK--DO YOU STILL HOLD THE NFL RECORD FOR MOST PUNTS BLOCKED WITH YOUR HEAD?
WELL, IT AIN'T ACTUALLY OFFICIAL, BUT--
SIT DOWN AND FORGET IT, ROADBLOCK. LITTLE JANIE'S JUST PULLIN' YORE LEG.
MORE LIKE HIS HOOF, I'D SAY
AND THE NAME'S STILL JOHN!
DON'T WORRY, HONEY. AH DIDN'T GET IT WRONG ON THE CHECK. ONE HUNDRED GRAND--THAT'S A HIVE OF ZEROES
Y'ALL FIND THAT LI'L OL STAIRWAY FOR ME YET, HONEY?
NOW I'M THE ONE HAVING THE LIMB PULLED, SLIM.
I FOUND IT, ALL RIGHT--BUT I GAVE IT TO THE GUY YOU HAD ME MEET LAST NIGHT AT GRIFFITH PARK.
AT LEAST, ME TOOK ME ON THE PHONE ME WORKED FOR YOU.
AH DIDN'T HAVE ANYBODY CALL YUH LITTLE LADY--OR MEET YUH
AH THINK MEBBE YORE JOSHIN' ME--
--BUT JUST IN CASE YORE NOT--!
HEY!
YOU'RE A LITTLE OLD AND MUCH TOO RICH FOR PURSE-SNATCHING, AREN'T YOU, SLIM?
DON'T WORRY. AH'LL PAY YOU IF IT'S HERE. BUT AH THINK AH DESERVE A PEEK, IF Y'ALL DON'T MIND
I'LL SEE TO IT SHE DON'T GET TO MINDING TOO MUCH, MR C
10


NO WONDER EVEN DAD DISTRUSTED YOU IN THE END! BUT HE FIGURED YOU FOR A HUSTLER--NOT A MURDERER!
WAIT! AH THINK AH GOT SOMETHING..
WATCH YOUR MOUTH, GIRLIE, OR I'LL HAVETA--

YEEOW! DARN VARMINT! IT BIT ME!

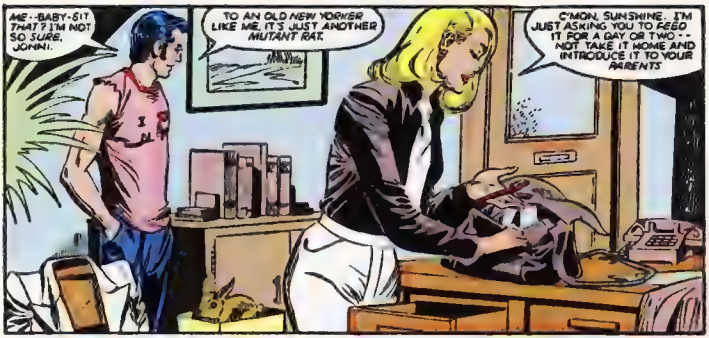
WHAT THE HELL'S A RABBIT DOING IN YOUR HANDBAG?
YOU WANT ME TO ANSWER YOU--OR THE PHONE?
GET IT! I DON'T WANT THAT LONG-LASHED OPERATOR DOWN THE HALL TROTTIN' UP TO SEE WHY YUH DON'T.
RINNGG
RINNGG

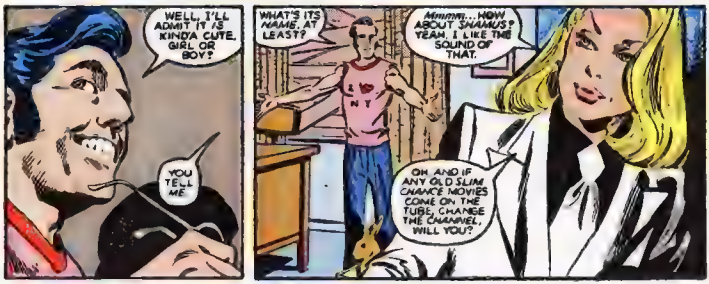
BUT CAREFUL WHAT Y'ALL SAY, HONEY--PARTY LINE, Y'KNOW!
THUNDER INVESTIGATIONS... OH, HI, LIEUTENANT... YOU'VE IDENTIFIED THE BEADMAN'S ROOMIES IN PRISON, WERE THEY? INTERESTING
SURE. SEE YOU THEN, LIEUTENANT.. AND THANKS!


NOW, I BELIEVE YOU WANTED TO KNOW ABOUT THE RABBIT--*
NEVER MIND! THAT WAS THE POLICE ON THE PHONE, WASN'T IT? WHAT'D THEY WANT?
ASK THEM YOURSELF THEY'RE ON THEIR WAY OVER HERE, TO ASK ME SOME QUESTIONS.
*SEE LAST ISSUE.--R.

STICK AROUND! I'M SURE THEY MIGHT THINK OF ONE OR TWO FOR YOU GUYS.
THE LAW CAIN'T TOUCH ME--AND AH'D ADVISE YOU AGAINST GIVIN' 'EM A REASON TO TRY
HASTA LUEGO, JONNI!--AND I DO MEAN LUEGO!

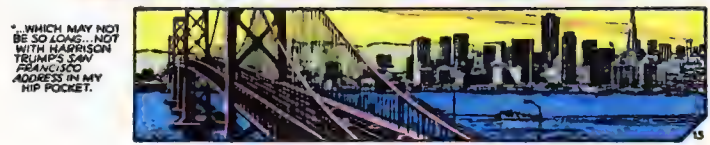
"MAYBE YOU'RE RIGHT, SLIM. MAYBE THE LAW CAN'T TOUCH YOU.
"BUT I WOULDN'T BE SO SURE ABOUT JUSTICE, SWEETMES. THAT'S A DIFFERENT THING ENTIRELY.
GUESS WE SHOWED EM THERE'S NO DUMB BUNNIES IN THIS OFFICE, HUH FELLA?
AND NO NIBBLING ON THE FURNITURE WHILE I'M OUT, OKAY?
MY PACKAGE, LEON. IF YOU'RE NOT TOO BUSY?
ME? WITH TWO CUSTOMERS ALL MORNING? IT'S RIGHT--
OH MY GOD! IT'S GONE! JONNI-- I'M SO SORRY!
NOT YOUR FAULT. SOMEBODY MUST'VE SEEN ME DUCK IN HERE WITH IT.
CAN YOU DESCRIBE THOSE TWO CUSTOMERS, LEON?
ONE OF 'EM IS BINGO HERE. HE'S A REGULAR
THE OTHER ONE-- WELL--I DIDN'T GET MUCH OF A LOOK AT HIM...
HE WAS REALLY WEIRD, Y'KNOW? TRENCH-COAT--GANGSTER HAT-- AND GRASS STAINS ALL OVER 'IM.
GRASS STAINS THE SAME SHADE AS MY LAWN, I'LL BET!
THANKS, BINGO. HAVE A COPY OF DIANETICS ON ME!
SEE YOU LATER LEON
NOW BE CAREFUL JONNI! WONDER WOMAN, YOU'RE NOT!
NOT TILL I GET THAT PACKAGE BACK, ANYWAY. BYE!
?

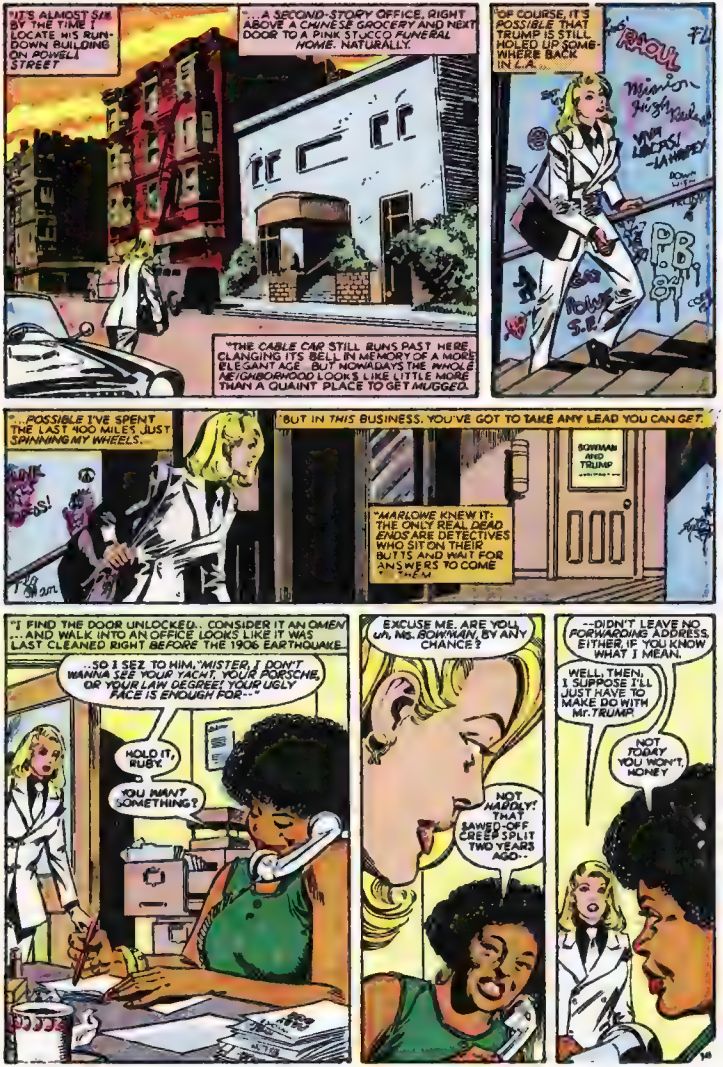

ME--BABY-SIT THAT? I'M NOT SO SURE, JOHN!.
TO AN OLD NEW YORKER LIKE ME, IT'S JUST ANOTHER MUTANT RAT.
C'MON, SUNSHINE.. I'M JUST ASKING YOU TO FEED IT FOR A DAY OR TWO.. NOT TAKE IT HOME AND INTRODUCE IT TO YOUR PARENTS.


WELL, I'LL ADMIT IT IS KINDA CUTE. GIRL OR BOY?
YOU TELL ME.
WHAT'S ITS NAME, AT LEAST?
I ♥ NY
MMMM... NOW ABOUT SHAMUS? YEAH, I LIKE THE SOUND OF THAT.
OH, AND IF ANY OLD SLIM CHANCE MOVIES COME ON THE TUBE, CHANGE THE CHANNEL, WILL YOU?

"A FEW MINUTES LATER AFTER MY CUSTOMARY BOUT WITH MY T.&A.R.D. I HIT THE VENTURA FREEWAY POINTED NORTH.
"I'M THINKING MAYBE I SHOULD'VE CALLED MIKE SANCHEZ FIRST; COPS GET DOWNRIGHT SUSPICIOUS WHEN THEIR SUSPECTS LEAVE TOWN SUDDENLY.

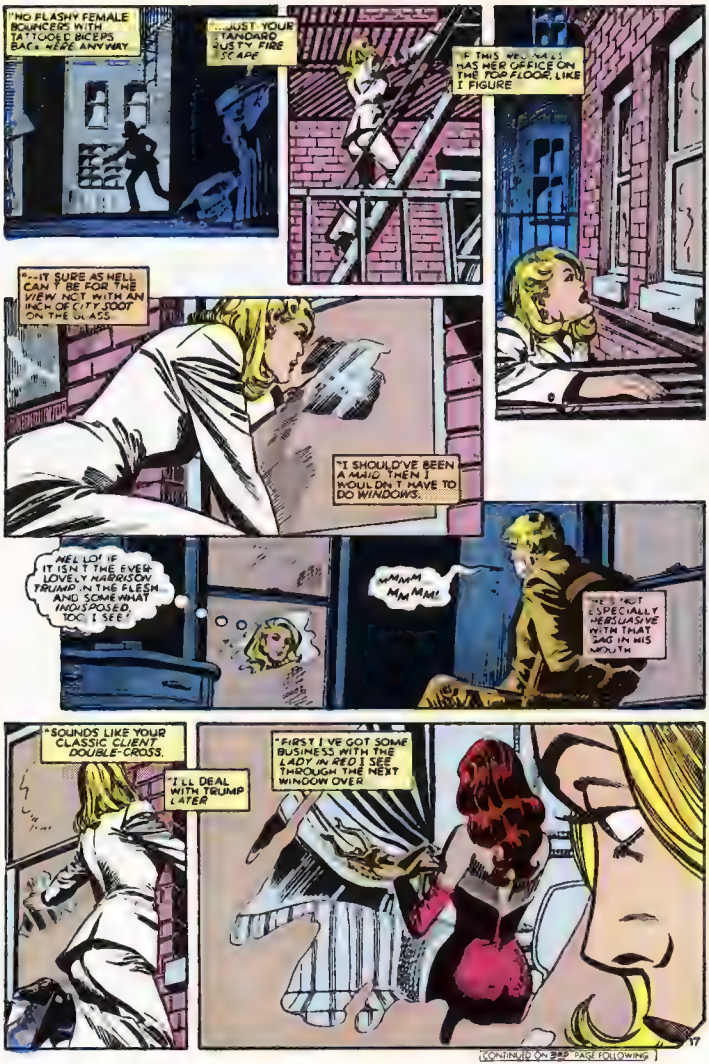
"BUT THEN I'D HAVE TO TELL HIM ABOUT THE STATUE AND I'D LIKE TO FIND OUT MORE ABOUT IT MYSELF FIRST.
5
San Francisco
398 MILES
**DO THAT, I'LL HAVE TO GET MY HAND ON IT AGAIN...


*..WHICH MAY NOT BE SO LONG... NOT WITH HARRISON TRUMP'S SAN FRANCISCO ADDRESS IN MY HIP POCKET.


"IT'S ALMOST SIX BY THE TIME I LOCATE MR. RUM-DOWN BUILDING ON POWELL STREET
"...A SECOND-STORY OFFICE, RIGHT ABOVE A CHINESE GROCERY AND NEXT DOOR TO A PINK STUCCO FUNERAL HOME. NATURALLY.
"THE CABLE CAR STILL RUNS PAST HERE, CLANGING ITS BELL IN MEMORY OF A MORE ELEGANT AGE. BUT NOWADAYS THE WHOLE NEIGHBORHOOD LOOKS LIKE LITTLE MORE THAN A QUAINT PLACE TO GET MUGGED.
"OF COURSE, IT'S POSSIBLE THAT TRUMP IS STILL HOLED UP SOMEWHERE BACK IN L.A.
RAOUL
Mission High Rules
YOUR LOCKS! -LA HAPPY
P.B. 'n' J
Rolling S.F.
"...POSSIBLE I'VE SPENT THE LAST 400 MILES JUST SPINNING MY WHEELS.
"BUT IN THIS BUSINESS, YOU'VE GOT TO TAKE ANY LEAD YOU CAN GET.
BOWMAN AND TRUMP
"MARLOWE KNEW IT: THE ONLY REAL DEAD ENDS ARE DETECTIVES WHO SIT ON THEIR BUTTS AND WAIT FOR ANSWERS TO COME TO THEM
"I FIND THE DOOR UNLOCKED... CONSIDER IT AN OMEN ...AND WALK INTO AN OFFICE LOOKS LIKE IT WAS LAST CLEANED RIGHT BEFORE THE 1906 EARTHQUAKE.
...SO I SEZ TO HIM, "MISTER, I DON'T WANNA SEE YOUR YACHT, YOUR PORSCHE, OR YOUR LAW DEGREE! YOUR UGLY FACE IS ENOUGH FOR--"
HOLD IT, RUBY.
YOU WANT SOMETHING?
EXCUSE ME. ARE YOU, uh, MS. BOWMAN, BY ANY CHANCE?
NOT HARDLY! THAT SAWED-OFF CREEP SPLIT TWO YEARS AGO--
--DIDN'T LEAVE NO FORWARDING ADDRESS, EITHER. IF YOU KNOW WHAT I MEAN.
WELL, THEN, I SUPPOSE I'LL JUST HAVE TO MAKE DO WITH MR. TRUMP!
NOT TODAY YOU WON'T, HONEY

HE JUST LEFT. COME BACK TOMORROW --NOT TOO EARLY.
NOW, AS I WAS SAYING, RUBY--
"SO TRUMP IS BACK IN THE CITY BY THE BAY.' GOOD!
"CHANCES ARE, THEN, THAT MY STOLEN STATUE'S AROUND HERE, TOO--
"...MAYBE EVEN TUCKED AWAY IN HIS DESK DRAWER BEHIND A CHEAP BOTTLE OF BOOZE.
"I FIND ITS WRAPPINGS FAST ENOUGH-- NO SIGN OF THE STATUE ITSELF, THOUGH-
HEY, YOU! GET OUTTA THERE, OR I'M CALLIN' THE COPS!
YOU'LL HAVE TO HANG THE PHONE UP, FIRST
OKAY, BLONDIE, IF THAT'S THE WAY YOU WANT--
NAME'S JONNI THUNDER. AND YOUR BOSS LEFT HIS WALLET AT MY PLACE THIS MORNING.
WELL, I'M DORIS... MR. TRUMP'S SECRETARY. I'LL SEE HE GETS IT.
NO, I'D RATHER SEE HARRY... PERSONALLY.
INTIMATE REASONS... IF YOU GET MY MEANING.
YOU, TOO, huh, HONEY? I GOT MAN TROUBLE OF MY OWN.
GUESS YOU'RE OKAY. YOU MIGHT CATCH HIM AT THE CHICKIE CLUB ON BROADWAY...
OWNER'S A CLIENT.
THANKS, DORIS. I'LL CALL YOU FROM VEGAS IF WE DECIDE TO ELOPE.
ONLY IF YOU BROUGHT YOUR SHOT-GUN, HONEY.
"SO I WALK DOWN TO BROADWAY
"THE AREA CALLED NORTH BEACH HASN'T CHANGED MUCH. IT'S STILL A LOT LIKE THE WORST DREGS OF HOLLYWOOD, OR 42nd STREET IN NEW YORK. SAME PORNO PARLORS, SAME DRUGGED-OUT SCUM...
XXX GIRLS' GIRLS' XXX
CHICKIE CLUB
"...AND RIGHT IN THE MIDDLE OF ALL THIS TRIPLE-X-RATED COMMERCE STANDS THE INFAMOUS CHICKIE CLUB.

EXCUSE ME, LADIES- YOU WORK HERE?
PROPERTY OF ALCATRAZ
NAW, WE'RE COLLECTIN' FOR THE MARCH OF DIMES.
COMMENDABLE. MAY I SPEAK WITH THE OWNER PLEASE.
RED NAILS DON'T WANNA SEE NOBODY TONIGHT.
AND IF IT'S 'CAUSE YOU WANNA BECOME A MORNING GIRL-- FORGET IT, SCRAWNY--
MMMMFF--!
..YOU AIN'T THE TYPE!
SWING THAT ELBOW AT ME AGAIN, WHITE FANG, AND IT'LL COME BACK TO YOU IN A SLING.
TALKIN' SMART NOW, huh? WHO D'YA THINK YOU ARE.. JOAN RIVERS?
MAYBE SHE'S YOUR NEW PROBATION OFFICER, GLADYS
CAN'T BE THEY AIN'T FISHED THE LAST ONE OUTTA THE BAY YET
HA HA HA HA
"SO MUCH FOR THE FRONT DOOR APPROACH.
"Hmmm..
APPEARING AT 10 AND 12
Red Nails
"SEEMS THIS 'RED NAILS' IS OWNER AND STAR, ROLLED IN TO ONE.
GET YOUR BACK SCRATCHED RIGHT TONITE!
"ROLLED PRETTY WELL, TOO, AS THAT SORT OF THING GOES.
"NO WONDER TRUMP WAS IN SUCH A HURRY TO GET BACK TO HIS CLIENT IN FRISCO--
"--WITH A GRIN ON HIS FACE, AND MY STATUE IN HIS HOT LITTLE HANDS


"NO FLASHY FEMALE BOUNCERS WITH TATTOOED BICEPS BACK HERE ANYWAY.
...JUST YOUR STANDARD DUSTY FIRE SCARE
"IF THIS WELMAS HAS HER OFFICE ON THE TOP FLOOR, LIKE I FIGURE
"...IT SURE AS HELL CAN'T BE FOR THE VIEW NOT WITH AN INCH OF CITY SOOT ON THE GLASS.
"I SHOULD'VE BEEN A MAID. THEN I WOULDN'T HAVE TO DO WINDOWS.
WELL LOOK IF IT ISN'T THE EVER-LOVELY HARRISON TRUMP IN THE FLESH. AND SOMEWHAT INDISPOSED, TOO, I SEE!
MMMM MMMM!
HE'S NOT ESPECIALLY PERSUASIVE WITH THAT GAG IN HIS MOUTH
"SOUNDS LIKE YOUR CLASSIC CLIENT DOUBLE-CROSS.
"I'LL DEAL WITH TRUMP LATER
"FIRST I'VE GOT SOME BUSINESS WITH THE LADY IN RED I SEE THROUGH THE NEXT WINDOW OVER
17
[CONTINUED ON PAGE FOLLOWING]

"... THE ART OF BUSINESS IS BEST CONDUCTED WITH A .38 IN YOUR HAND."
KRAASH!
MMM...
FREEZE, RED NAILS! I CAN BREAK THINGS WITH THIS END OF A GUN, TOO.
I WANT THAT STATUE AND I WANT IT NOW!
AH...
THE ONE YOU HIRED TRUMP TO STEAL IT FROM THIS MORNING, JONNI THUNDER, P.I.
AND HOW BADE I ASH ADE TU?
THUNDER... RATHER AN ODD NAME THA?
YOU SHOULD TALK
THEN GUIT STALLING AND GIVE!
IF YOU INSIST. AFTER ALL, YOU DO SEEM TO HAVE THE UPPER--
BLAMM
AGGGK!
MMM?
POW!

"AT FIRST, I COULD SWEAR IT'S MY OWN MISFIRED *BULLET* I FEEL RIPPING ITS WAY THROUGH MY HEAD

"BUT I'M WRONG. IT'S JUST THE *PAIN*...

"... AN UNBEARABLE RHYTHMIC *THROBBING*, LIKE AN ELEPHANT TAP-DANCING '*BEAT IT*' ACROSS MY SKULL.

"ALL AT ONCE, THE FLOOR COMES 'ROUND, AND I *GRAB* IT QUICK--

BEFORE IT CAN GET AWAY.

"AS WE *BOTH* SPIN, I CAN HEAR RED NAILS *LAUGHING*...

IF YOU'RE NOT DEAD *ALREADY*, THUNDER, YOU'RE SOON GOING TO WISH YOU *WERE*. HAHAHA

"HOW DOES SHE EXPECT ME TO *SLEEP*, WITH HER *LAUGHING* LIKE THAT?

"MAYBE IF I *ASK* HER REAL NICE...

SH-SHUT UP-- DAMN YOU--!

"FORCING MY GOOD EYE OPEN, I SEE A FAMILIAR *GOLDEN FIGURE* LYING THERE--LIKE A BEAUTIFUL ANGEL FALLEN FROM ATOP A CHRISTMAS TREE--

"--RADIANT-- *BECKONING*. I REACH OUT TO *TOUCH* HER--

"AND WHEN I DO, IT ALL HAPPENS *ONE MORE* TIME

"THE *SPARKS* AND THE *TINGLING* AND THAT *SIZZLING* SOUND--

"--TILL SUDDENLY, I'M *FLYING* AGAIN--FLYING FROM MY BODY AS A SURGE OF *UNCAGED LIGHTNING*--

"--A HUMAN *THUNDERBOLT!*

OMIGOD!

"ONLY *THIS* TIME, I KNOW IT'S FOR REAL!

"AND THIS TIME AROUND THE PIKE--MAYBE I'M UP FOR IT.
"SURE, I GRABBED FOR THE STATUE BY SHEER INSTINCT--BUT WHEN THE THUNDERBOLT THING HAPPENS TO ME AGAIN, I'M READY!
"FIRST, SCRATCH ONE CRYSTAL CHANDELIER--
ZZZZ-ZAK!
"--DITTO FOR THE DOORKNOB!
'NO WAY AM I GOING TO LET BIG RED GET AWAY, NO MATTER WHO OR WHAT I AM.
ZZZZZZZ
JESUS!
"BUT I DON'T WANT TO KILL HER, EITHER--AND I'VE GOT A CREEPY FEELING SHE SENSES IT.
I DON'T CLAIM TO KNOW QUITE WHAT'S GOING ON HERE--
BUT THE POWER OF THAT IDOL WAS SUPPOSED TO BE MINE, NOT YOURS--
--AND I'M DAMNED IF I'LL SEE IT FALL INTO THE HANDS OF SOME SURFER-GIRL GUMSHOE!
"HAVEN'T FIGURED OUT HOW TO MAKE HUMAN LIGHTNING SPEAK, YET--
"BUT I CAN STILL HEAR WELL ENOUGH TO KNOW THAT RED NAILS MAY JUST HOLD THE SECRET OF THIS WHOLE LITTLE MYSTERY.
29

"I FIGURE I'LL CORNER HER EASY ON THE ROOF
"HIGH TIME WE BUMP-AND-GRIND AND I HAD A LITTLE CHAT--WITH HER DOING ALL THE TALKING, NATURALLY.
"BUT FIRST I'VE GOT TO FIND HER... AND THAT'S NOT GOING TO BE EASY, WITH THE WHOLE BLOCK BLACKED OUT.
"MY THUNDERBOLT PERSONA MUST'VE SHORTED A POWER LINE WHEN I HIT THAT CHANDELIER.
"AT LEAST, I GUESS THAT'S WHAT HAPPENED. THE FACT THAT I'VE NOW GOT THOUSANDS OF VOLTS OF POWER AT MY FINGERTIPS DOESN'T MAKE ME THE WIZARD OF MENLO PARK
"HECK, I CAN'T EVEN RECALL AT THIS MOMENT, HOW A LIGHT BULB WORKS.
"BUT I SURE CAN REMEMBER
"... WHAT IT TAKES TO TURN THEM ON
CHUCKLE CLUB

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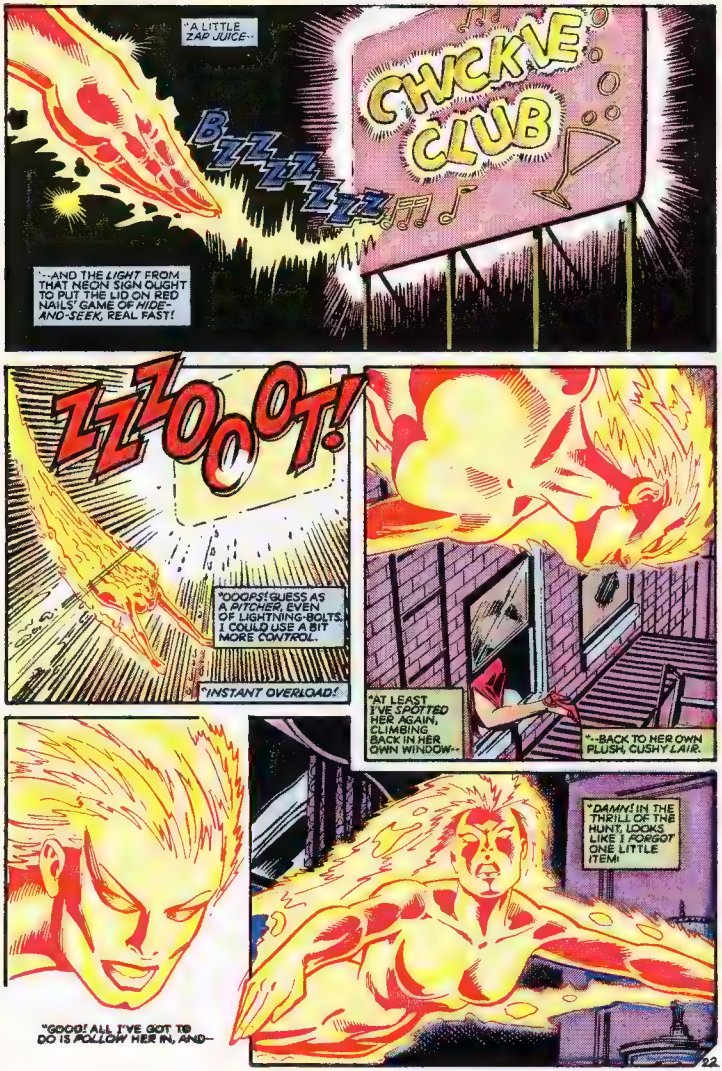
"A LITTLE ZAP JUICE--
BZZZZZZZZZZZ
CHICKIE CLUB
"--AND THE LIGHT FROM THAT NEON SIGN OUGHT TO PUT THE LID ON RED NAILS' GAME OF HIDE-AND-SEEK, REAL FAST!
ZZZOOOT!
"OOOPS! GUESS AS A PITCHER, EVEN OF LIGHTNING-BOLTS, I COULD USE A BIT MORE CONTROL.
"INSTANT OVERLOAD!
"AT LEAST I'VE SPOTTED HER AGAIN, CLIMBING BACK IN HER OWN WINDOW--
"--BACK TO HER OWN PLUSH, CUSHY LAIR.
"GOOD! ALL I'VE GOT TO DO IS FOLLOW HER IN, AND--
"DAMN! IN THE THRILL OF THE HUNT, LOOKS LIKE I FORGOT ONE LITTLE ITEM!

"NAMELY--*MYSELF!*"

CHECKMATE TIME! I RATHER EXPECT THAT WHEN I FIRE A *BULLET* INTO THE VERY HUMAN HEAD OF *MS. JONNI THUNDER*--

--I'LL BE GETTING RID OF *TWO* VERY DISTINCT PAINS, FOR THE PRICE OF *ONE!*

NEXT ISSUE: THE *SHOCKING* SECRET OF THUNDERBOLT!

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A JONNI THUNDER SCRAPBOOK

As previously noted, two very different and very fine comic-book artists were considered at various times for our JONNI THUNDER, A.K.A. THUNDERBOLT mini-series.

From the very beginning, way back in 1981 when I sent him and publisher Jenette Kahn a hasty "prospectus" on Jonni (based on conversations with my co-creator, Gerry Conway), then-managing editor Dick Giordano had expressed an interest in illustrating the series. Two of Dick's great confessed loves in drawing are private eyes and beautiful women, at both of which he excells—so he was a natural. And, having known Dick both personally and professionally since shortly after I moved to New York in 1965, I was eager to work with him.

In the meantime, however, I'd spoken with another talented artist, Ernie Colón, for whom I'd developed great fondness as well as considerable respect when we'd worked together on *Conan* at Marvel; Ernie, of course, was already laboring away with me on the early issues of ARAK, SON OF THUNDER.

A plethora of riches! What to do?

Well, as it turned out, things solved themselves, because Ernie got busy with AMETHYST, and Dick—while always as busy himself as anybody in the business—shoehorned JONNI THUNDER into his own schedule somehow.

However, Ernie had done some interesting and useful sketches of Jonni and her electrically-oriented alter ego, including one (unfortunately lost) of Jonni, gun in hand, clad in a mannish black-and-white suit. Somehow, that clicked with me—perhaps partly because my own red-haired wife and probably writing partner on the strip, Dann Thomas, tends to dress in mostly black and white. Somehow, it just seemed right.

At any rate, Dick and I wanted you to see those early sketches of Ernie's, reproduced below (some from pencils, others complete with Ernie's hand-written suggestions), which otherwise weren't likely ever to see print in a comic-book...or anyplace else, for that matter.

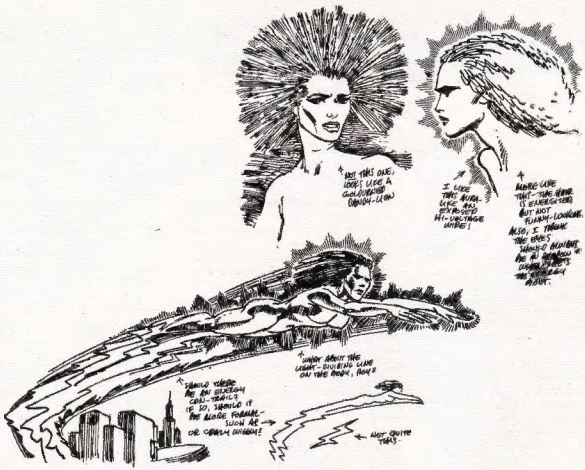
And now—like everybody always says, at about this point—

Enjoy!

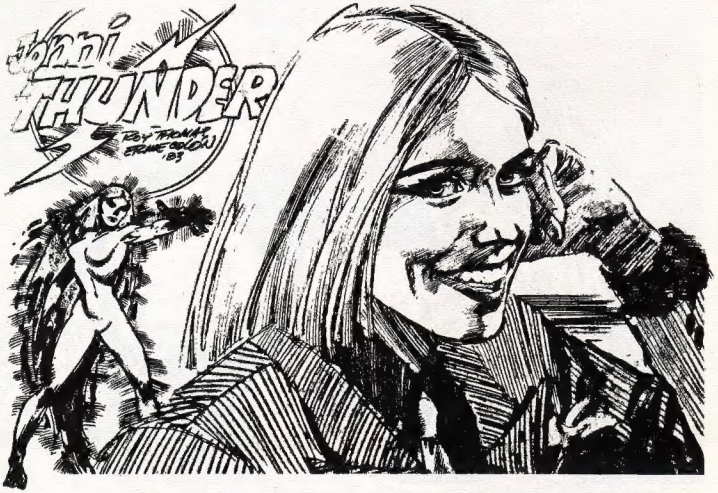
—Roy Thomas

(A) Here's Ernie's earliest extant piece, already sporting the black-and-white look—even on the Thunderbolt, as it turns out!

(B) And here are a bunch of rougher sketches (minus a few which, being only in blue pencil, simply wouldn't repro) along with Ernie's thoughts


NOT THIS ONE; LOOKS LIKE A GODDAMNED DARKH-LON
I LIKE THIS ALMOST BACK AND FORTH HI-TECH/TRIBE LOOK!
MORE LIKE THAT— THAT WORKS (I DON'T KNOW) BUT NOT FUNKY-LOOKING. ALSO, I THINK THE EYES SHOULD REMAIN AS A SYMBOL OF UNDERSTANDING THE SUPERNATURAL ABOUT.
WHAT ABOUT THE USUAL-DIVINE LOOK ON THIS PAGE, MAYBE
SHOULD THERE BE AN ALIEN GIRL-THINGS IF SO, SHOULD IT BE MORE FEMME-SUCH AS OR CERTAIN WOMEN?
NOT QUITE THERE

(C) Just before work on AMETHYST forced him to withdraw from the project, Ernie had even taken to working with a model to get the look he wanted—and had come up with still another version of Thunderbolt, as well...



Somewhere in the next couple of issues, we hope to reprint some of Dick Giordano's early sketches, as well. Till then—don't go poking around in any light sockets. hear? You might just get a slap in the face!

MEANWHILE...

Have you seen the **SWAMP THING ANNUAL?** How about **SPANNER'S GALAXY, CONQUEROR OF THE BARREN EARTH, JONNI THUNDER,** or **ROBOTECH DEFENDERS?** Or a book that's near and dear to my heart, **SUPERMAN: THE SECRET YEARS?** You have?

Notice something **different** about them? How more vibrant the color seems? Must be the paper, right? Wrong! It's the same 37-pound Mando paper we've been using. What you're seeing in these books is the work of the new printing press just recently "launched" by Spartan Printing Company: the Flexographic press.

What the folks at Sparta have done (and those of you who follow Dick's **Meanwhile** columns regularly will remember a mention of this a few months back) is offer flexography as an alternative to the "normal" letterpress printing and the much higher-price offset printing. As soon as they mentioned it to us at DC, we expressed an interest in being the first to utilize the press.

A few weeks ago they called and said they were ready. We offered up our mini-series (and added some specials a short time after) and a day later yours truly was winging my way west to watch **SPANNER'S GALAXY** #1 run. There were glitches in the system and some copies had to be done on the letterpress to meet shipping deadlines, but I was so pleased with the look of the book that I came back with a glowing report.

As I write this, I'm sitting on a plane on my way back from watching the **SWAMP THING ANNUAL** run. The Sparta people have worked out almost all the problems and this book looks really great. "But we're not satisfied yet," says Dick Hartman, who runs the plant. "We've got more work to do to make it even better!" By the time you read this, they'll have run some more books. (And I'll probably have "commuted" back and forth a couple more times!)

Is it worth it? Flexographic printing will be a more expensive method than letterpress, but I've been told by the folks at the dollars and cents end of the hall that we should be able to hold the 75¢ price on the 32-page books. So, yes, it's definitely worth it to you, the reader.

And it's worth it to me as Production Manager. Why else would I work a full day in the office, spend seven hours flying from New York to St. Louis and then driving 75 miles to Sparta, spend the next day at the printing plant, and then reverse the seven-hour trip to be home just in time (it feels like) to go back to the office again tomorrow? I sure don't do it because I like feeling like I've worked a full week in 2 days!

P.S. Hey, Dick: Couldn't we change our slogan from "Where legends live" to "Where production values count"? (How about "Where the Production Manager never goes off duty"?)

Thanks, Bob, I appreciate your taking time out of your hectic schedule to give our readers an update on **FLEXOGRAPHIC**, the new (and better!) printing process made available to us by **WORLD COLOR PRESS.** I mentioned the pending arrival of **FLEXOGRAPHIC** in this column several months back. Glad I didn't lie!

Bob Rozakis is DC's production manager (although at night and on weekends Bob can be found at home, slaving over a hot typewriter, most currently as the author of the hot new mini-series **SUPERMAN: THE SECRET YEARS**). As such he is one of many who toil behind the scenes quietly, professionally, and almost anonymously, working toward the goal I aspired to in a much earlier **MEANWHILE COLUMN** ... of making comics all that they can be. We strive to make improvements in the creativity of our comics, to make them more fun (read **BLUE DEVIL** lately?), better reading (**SWAMP THING!**), better drawn (**CAMELOT #12** is out as you read this. Try Pat Broderick's **DETECTIVE** stories if you're not near a comics shop ... or **WHO'S WHO!** issue #2 should be on sale now, I think...), and just plain more entertaining! But can our comics ever really be all that they can be without better production values? I think not. Most of the good folks here at **DC** feel as I do: If we're to publish comics that have a broader appeal, some aimed at an older, more sophisticated reader, we must improve the look of our comics ... even (especially!) our lowest-priced comics. So we've taken a step in that direction with **FLEXOGRAPHIC,** thanks to our own Bob Rozakis and **WORLD COLOR PRESS**'s letterpress production manager, Bob Craig.

Before you rush off to tell me what you think, let me tell you what I know.

I know:

1) The colors look garish.

2) There are holes or blotches on some of the colors.

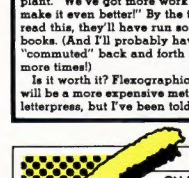
3) Many of the colors don't meet the lines they're supposed to go up to, or they go over those lines.

I know...Bugs!

Every new process or technology has bugs. **FLEXOGRAPHIC** is no exception. It needs to be debugged. We've already gone a long way in the debugging process, and by the time you read this, most of the registration problems will have been solved, along with the blotchy colors. The more difficult problem will be retraining our colorists to use more subtle colors and to reduce tonal values by 25%. In the past, a colorist called for 100% red when he or she wanted a color to look like 75% red. Now with **FLEXOGRAPHIC,** what you ask for is what you get! Most of us have been using the old system for 30 years or so. It's going to take time to experiment and learn. And we're willing to put in the time, effort, and money to make this printing process more effective—even though at this point in time we're the only publisher doing so, and even though we know that when the system is debugged, other publishers will be able to walk in and take advantage of a superior printing process that we helped make possible by providing the books to print and the manpower to help make it work. We will—maybe by the time you read this—then we'll be another step closer to making comics all that they can be.

Thank You and Good Afternoon.

Dick



☐ **Crisis on Infinite Earths 1:** The most eagerly awaited series of all starts with 32 pages and no ads!

☐ **Justice League of America 237:** Superman, Wonder Woman, and Flash face the Mad Maestro!

☐ **Atari Force 16:** Whatever's wrong with Taz spells trouble for the Force!

☐ **Jonni Thunder 3:** High above San Francisco, Jonni fights for her life!

☐ **DC Comics Presents 80:** Superman and the Legion of Super-Heroes!

☐ **Fury of Firestorm 34:** The return of Killer Frost, deadlier than before!

☐ **Best of DC Digest 59:** Superman's greatest epics!

☐ **Vigilante 16:** Danger lurks in the city subways and may kill Vigilante!

☐ **Superman: The Secret Years 3:** Is Superboy ready to become Superman?

☐ **Wonder Woman 324:** Introducing the new Atomic Knight!

☐ **Tales of the Teen Titans 53:** The trial of the Terminator begins with Judge Adrian Chase!